



CLARK COUNTY HOUSING OPTIONS STUDY AND ACTION PLAN

Project Advisory Group Meeting #9

January 25, 2022 – 3PM to 5PM

SUMMARY

PAG Members: Stephan Abramson, Ron Barca, Sierk Braam, Victor Caesar, Yolanda Frazier, Julia Getchell, Mark Maggiora, Christina Marneris, Martha Maier, Julie Olson, Eric Scott, Bryan Snodgrass, Phil Wuest.

County Staff: Susan Ellinger, Jacqui Kamp, Jenna Kay

Consultants: Steve Faust (3J Consulting), Elizabeth Decker (JET Planning)

Welcome

Steve Faust welcomed PAG members and guests to the ninth and final PAG meeting and reviewed the agenda. The main purpose of today's meeting is for PAG members to review and comment on draft priority strategies using an agreed upon consensus-based process.

Announcements

Jacqui Kamp thanked PAG members for their participation throughout the process. A reminder as we move into the legislative process to reach out to groups that you represent or are in your network to have their voice heard with Planning Commission and County Council. We hope you will continue to stay engaged through those meetings and testify and support those strategies you see as most important. Thank you to Councilor Olson and Sierk and Stephan for participating with CVTV on the Close Up piece that is airing now and into March.

Process

Steve reviewed the project schedule. Following this PAG meeting, the project team will prepare the draft Housing Action Plan and recommendations for consideration by Planning Commission and County Council in spring of 2022. With guidance from those bodies, the project team will refine recommended strategies to make them implementation-ready. Those actions will be reviewed by the public before going through the adoption process.

Community Outreach Summary

Steve described the community engagement process since the last PAG meeting, which included:

- Virtual public meeting
- Online questionnaire – received 105 responses



- Presentations to seven community groups including: Middle Class Alliance, Vancouver City Council Workshop, Clark County Association of Realtors, Building Industry Association of Clark County, Coalition of Homeless Serve Providers, Team 99 representatives, and the Commission on Aging.

Online Questionnaire Results

When asked about the importance of each of the four categories of HAP strategies:

- 82.6% of respondents said the **Housing Choices** strategies are important or very important.
- 80.2% of respondents said the **Affordable Housing** strategies are important or very important.
- 74% of respondents said the **Programs and Partnerships** strategies are important or very important.
- 73% of respondents said the **Advocacy** strategies are important or very important.

Near-Term Housing Options

- Revising cottage standards and expanding middle housing types in low and medium density residential zones received the most support.
- Strategies to implement state mandated multifamily parking ratios and adopt a “visitability” program received the least support.

Near-Term Affordable Housing

- Expanding options for affordable residential uses in commercial zones, revising the development code for the conversion of motels and hotels into affordable housing, and implementing bonuses density for affordable housing on religious organizations’ land received the most support.

Near-Term Programs and Partnerships

- Supporting neighborhood-scale retail within neighborhoods, reducing development review timelines, and identifying an affordable housing point-of-contact received the most support.

Near-Term Advocacy

- The two strategies to advocate for county eligibility for the multi-family tax exemption and for changes to the condominium defect liability law received significant support.

Long-Term Housing Options

- Reviewing impact fees to reflect the impact of dwelling types, studying upzoning of existing land or applying higher density zoning to new lands, and discussing adjustments to the Countywide Planning Policy ratio of single family detached homes to other housing types received the most support.
- Studying reductions to off-street parking minimums for multifamily residential developments received the least support.

Long-Term Affordable Housing

- Strategies receiving the most support include:
 - Review and reduce impact fees for regulated affordable housing
 - Explore Tax Increment Financing as a tool to support affordable housing
 - Explore development standard bonuses
 - Review land use and non-life-safety engineering standards to reduce barriers for low income housing projects

Long-Term Programs and Partnerships

- A universal design program for persons with disabilities or who are mobility challenged, increasing access to neighborhood scale retail within residential neighborhoods, and supporting the initiative for electronic plan review received the most support.
- Research the impact of short-term rentals received the least support.

Key Issues

Key issues identified through the community engagement process include:

- Support for strategies to support low income and houseless populations
- Desire for consistent policies and regulations with the City of Vancouver
- Concern about the livability of existing neighborhoods
- Concern about a potential tax burden on residents
- Housing choice in size, design, and prices is important
- Housing options are needed for people with a wide range of disabilities
- Mechanisms should be implemented to protect county investments and ensure long-term affordability
- Desire for more strategies to support mobile home and manufactured home parks
- Concern about RVS as a long-term affordable housing solution
- Support for middle housing homeownership opportunities
- Desire for adequate infrastructure to support higher density development
- Desire for county-wide housing options and opportunities, including in rural areas
- Streamlining the development process and reducing regulations and fees
- Concern about reducing requirements for off-street parking.

Housing Action Plan: Final Recommendations

In order to ensure participation from PAG members, Steve called on each member in turn to identify any strategies that they would like to move between the short and long-term strategy lists, modify, add, or remove. The following is a summary of PAG comments:

- The recommendations are consistent with PAG conversations. There is a need for strategies to assist the houseless population, but it is important to note that was not a primary goal of this process.
- I have been impressed with the work. There are a lot of near and long-term strategies. I have no changes. The priorities around affordable housing for low and middle-income people are important. Strategies that provide a variety of housing types. Streamlining the permitting

process as we've heard that costs are going up. One of the themes I heard expressed is "yes, we need for more housing, and we are open to more dense housing, but not at the cost of a loss of infrastructure and amenities." People still want restaurants, supermarkets, sidewalks play spaces, etc. These recommendations emphasize those things.

- I propose changes to three strategies:
 - AH-3. Add language for the county to "Consider extending bonus density for affordable housing to non-religious organizations that meet the affordability and time duration requirements." **There were no objections to the proposed change.**
 - HO-16. Leading with the word 'study' implies that we don't already know if there is a problem. Lead with "Consider where appropriate, upzoning of existing County land..."
Also move to Near-Term strategies. **There were no objections to the proposed changes.**
- I am concerned that if we don't put some sort of targets on the strategies in which we are saying there are particular income brackets or groups for affordable housing, whether that is service workers or some other category, we will not have a baseline that we will be able to use to judge the effectiveness of the strategies. These need to go through with a proposal that is measurable to see results. We need more resources to establish that we are going after a particular constituency to say we made a difference and we need to have that in the proposal.
- What I have to say reflects opinions I've been getting from people in the neighborhood associations who have seen parts, but not necessarily all of what we are doing.
 - PP-5. Encouraging more commercial enterprises in residential zones. I have been speaking to this throughout the process. I would like to see it expanded and a higher priority given to it. At least in some areas, development have included in the zoning, a provision for small residential blocks that haven't been implemented. We need to look more deeply at how that can be promoted and how we can attract smaller commercial enterprises to improve walkability, especially where seniors are trying to age in place.
 - I've heard pushback to the proposed reduction of parking provisions, especially for multi-unit and cottage developments, especially in areas where the zoning is heavily weighted toward single family structures. I've heard pushback to allowing duplexes and triplexes.
 - Streamlining permitting process. There are some virtues to that, but pushback to expanding the kinds of developments that are allowed to use Type I review because that obviates the chance for residents to respond to changes that are imminent that will affect them.
 - Strong objections to changes in the Hwy 99 corridor.
 - Transit and parking need to be considered together.
- No issues with particular strategies or positions. Three things to consider.
 - The design of implementation of these strategies is going to be critical. If we try to design and implement them with the existing mix of development agents, we will not get where we need to go. We have to be innovative and creative in terms of where solutions can come from.
 - Neighborhood scale economic development framework. Has to be integrated with the opportunities and needs, as well as the opportunity to build new market mixes to attend to demands for middle housing. Strategies have to be designed to maximize the development capacity of building industry. We currently don't have the capacity or incentive or wealth to do so.

- Actions over studies. Got to turn toward monitoring and evaluation of initiatives that start to show progress.
- For middle housing and cottage development, workforce development and development incentives are going to be critical for long-term homeownership incentives and community building strategies. It's time to look at how the work gets done and that it's reflective of the progress we are looking for.
- I have no changes or recommendations. As a whole the recommendations have been moderate. There is a lot of public concern. I agree with previous recommendations. I fear that the horizon is too long and we will not move quickly enough these actions. Need to have a shorter horizon as people are screaming for the middle housing option.
- Overall, there is a shortage of land in the medium density zones. People in the business of attaining land to build homes that are attainable to families, it's pretty slim pickings. The following recommendations may be better suited to code development rather than these policy level recommendations:
 - HO-[2]. 40% maximum lot coverage is too low. I recommend at least 55%-60% as a minimum with maybe an option to go higher with incentives in place.
 - *We did add a note to look at appropriate lot coverage increases, but did not include that number. We wanted to leave it open ended for now.*
 - HO-4. Duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes should be allowed with a Type I process on legal lots in zones where they are allowed.
 - *This is part of the proposal.*
 - HO-9. The maximum height on cottages should increase from 25ft to 35 ft in the R-17.5 zone. That could add flexibility to the cottage code.
 - *"Cottages" means different things to different people. The 25ft height limit is intentional because cottages are supposed to be small. I don't know what a cottage needs to mean in Clark County, but if no one can build one, it doesn't mean very much.*
 - HO-2 and HO-16. We need more medium density residential land. Smaller lots and smaller buildings are one way the market tries to respond to the need for attainable housing. There is a strong incentive to deliver housing under 1500SF because of the energy code and the expense of meeting requirements when over that size. In addition to a new R1-2.5 zone, we need more R-12, R-18 and R-22 land. These are suitable zones for innovative and entry level housing and there is a severe shortage of available land in these zones. Medium density is 12-24 units per acre. 22 units is about where you top out when developing single family units. Over that is better suited to multifamily.
 - HO-9. The cottage garage area exemption shouldn't have a maximum size. However, if there is one, it should be at least a 400-500 SF. A garage area is typically inexpensive useful space and the building footprint square footage is usually controlled by the area on the second floor necessary to get 3 bedrooms and to baths to house the average family or roommate living scenario. The garage usually fills the void to match the area above and keep the cost down. The issue with garages in the cottage code has been discussed as part of this process and should be incorporated.
 - *Adding larger footprints for garages has some tradeoffs against the traditional idea of what the scale of cottages can be. Is it more important to be flexible and aim for a different product type?*
 - HO-4. Lot sizes for middle lots on attached homes should be allowed to go down to 1500 square feet. If the middle unit is an 18ft wide alley-load product, with a 10ft front-

- yard setback and 18ft garage setback off of the alley, the total lot would be 18ft x 88ft (for a 60ft deep building – typical 2-story, 3-bed, 2-bath home). 2000 feet is too big.
- *We can leave the wording as it is or add more flexibility.*
- HO-9. Allow Duplex Cottages. This could be an efficient way to meet the cottage requirements, increase usable yard and open space, and reduce construction cost. This would allow yards on each side with zero lot line in the middle.
- *This is a strategy that could be added to cottages and is part of the question of what a cottage is.*
- Design consideration. We do not support hard design requirements, for example, to put the front door out in front of the garage door in every case. While it may be appropriate and desirable for some designs, design requirements often add costs, limit variety, and make covered entries more difficult. The result is to discourage some efficient designs that can help achieve more affordable housing options.
- **The group agreed that the proposed changes are better suited to the implementation phase of the project.**
- I second the comments adopted previously by the group.
- I do not have objections or changes. I agree with what was just stated, especially about design. No matter what type of housing you're looking at, very rarely do you get to sit at the design table. How do we change or impact the livability in our neighborhoods – design is one way and so is deciding on lot sizes. You have people spending a lot of money on lots that are like side lots. When thinking about the entire infrastructure, we need to think about our livability, such as seniors having safe spaces to walk. We have all of these strategies and we are trying to make change, but how do we measure the change. We need to be more specific about which groups are being impacted.
- I came as an advocate for the disability community and a special interest in developmental disability, and I am most excited about the strategy for a variety of housing options that this study is proposing and for more affordable middle housing. It's great to see in the feedback that there was support for having a variety of options for people with a range of disabilities. I appreciate the public concern for the houseless community. There was some concern that we coordinate with Vancouver housing codes. Are we aligned with those? Consistency is good.
 - City and County staff recently presented to Vancouver City Council to look at various issues. There are some differences. Vancouver is implementing an immediate list of things whereas the County will bring these recommendations to Council and then implement them later. There are some differences, but more similarities.
- One suggestion is on AH-2 to about the conversion of motels and hotels into permanent affordable housing. Change the language to "temporary or permanent affordable housing." The Vancouver Housing Authority recently purchased a hotel that is currently being used as temporary housing, but will eventually be used for permanent housing." **There were no objections to the proposed change.**
- I appreciate the thoughtfulness and ideas about how we support older adults by providing initiatives that address accessibility and affordability and the variety of housing options.

The project team presented a few additional items to consider:

- HO-4 about middle housing. California and Oregon passed statewide mandates for cities to permit middle housing in single family areas and Washington has been considering several similar things. We don't know what will happen, but an ambitious middle housing bill has been

presented in the legislature. As written, it would not apply to unincorporated areas, only cities. What has been proposed here is in line with what is in that bill, but there are some differences such as looking at sixplexes. This could have an effect on consistency between the City of Vancouver and Clark County.

- HO-12 about RVs and tiny homes. There were a number of comments in the public engagement comments about how RVs can be used as housing opportunities. This is the strategy that emerged as a near-term strategy, but there are other ways RVs can be used in the long-term strategies, such as using RVs as ADUs. This is how it is split up for now. If the group wants to add more to the near-term strategy in terms of individual RVs on individual lots or small clusters in higher density areas, we can look at that.
 - When I read this previously, it seemed expansive, but reading it again, we are looking at the idea of manufactured home parks that would allow RVs into other zones. *This isn't specific to manufactured home parks which are already allowed by state law. This is specifically about RV parks which are only in one commercial zone to a second commercial zone. It does not bring RVs into residential zones.*
 - But they would be acting just like a manufactured home park. Someone else would own the land and charge them a fee for the privilege of parking their vehicle in this space.
 - Yes. *They are subject to different state codes, but they would function the same.*
- There were a number of comments about wanting more strategies for RVs. HO-24 explores additional potential for RVs and tiny homes in more residential settings on individual lots or in small RV parks.
- HO-14 about revising the definition of household. We had some comments from the public about interest in Single Room Occupancy, sometimes known as a boarding house. The difference between a single family home and boarding house/SRO has to do with the number of people that are in it. Current county code says a boarding house is if you are renting out rooms to four or more persons who are not a member of the family. These function like a single family home. We are not making any policy change recommendations that specifically address SROs or boarding houses by expanding them, this change to the definition of 'family' by removing the number of people, has a carryover effect that all of the bedrooms could be rented in a home and it would meet the definition of family. The distinction between an SRO and single family home will go away.
- HO-9 is a strategy that details a variety of changes to the existing cottage code. The idea is that cottage housing would continue to focus on smaller scale uses clustered around a common open space but with some additional flexibility to make it more feasible. The idea is to still keep it in what is a more traditional understanding of a cottage scale house. Rather than really open up the cottage housing code, the proposal in HO-2 is to create an alternative pathway with a compact subdivision that would have greater flexibility for things like greater allowances for garage spaces, etc. Still trying to keep it compact and includes a 25ft height limit and maybe that could be increased. The idea is rather than blow out the cottage housing code is to keep it as it is and use the compact subdivision as an alternative pathway for the interest in smaller scale homes on smaller lots to achieve greater economies and bring costs down, but not interested in the traditional cottage home.

PAG responses included:

- We need as many proposals as possible. We are going to be facing pushback from people who want to defend the status quo and the only answer is to open up additional land for a larger

inventory. We have to give them a lot of tools that are out there and available. I like the cottage and the small lot subdivision and we make infill as cheap as possible. I like that ADUs don't have to be just for hardship. There is a lot of opportunity to get more dwellings for people that are comfortable, affordable, and desirable. We have to get bold because no matter what we come up with is going to get cut back. I am in favor of these and more.

Public Comment

- I like the idea of separating cottages to keep the existing code and create more options. I would still encourage existing tweaks to the cottage code to make the project more efficient, such as allowing the central yard area to be used for other things, such as water filtration. More flexibility in looking at average sizes as opposed to putting hard caps and bottoms on how large the buildings and lots can be. We need to keep track of what comes out of this to make sure we develop this code and no one builds it. So, the evaluation process is critical. If it isn't working, find out why and tweak it. For the survey, it would have been helpful to categorize people in terms of their knowledge about the subject. As you educate yourself even slightly, your views change significantly.
- There was a letter put together by BIA, so I won't repeat that. We work a lot on trying to create middle housing and affordable housing and we run into roadblocks. Sometimes when you get out into the field, you find that the concepts don't work. One example is the cottage homes. One unintended consequence from limiting the garage and counting against the square footage, makes it an unbuildable and unmarketable product. With the way cottages are being built, they are basically skinny homes. Other cottages don't pencil out because they need more density and take too much land. Also, the demand is for 3 bedroom, 2.5 baths. When you're looking at what controls the square footage, the garage has almost nothing to do with it. The second floor has 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms and the area down below is the footprint of the home. There is a gap that gets put into the garage. It keeps clutter off the street and benefits the neighborhood. If you count the square footage against it, it makes the product type unbuildable. We need to exclude the garage area. There is not exclusion for detached garages. This is an unintended consequence of some language in a definition. They used a definition from our code including building envelope that included everything inside structural area for the fire code and should not have been applied here. With smaller developments, you cannot have the same lot coverage. Allowing duplex cottages is a great comment and comments about extending the density bonus to non-religious organizations.
- We have not submitted a letter since the fall from the BIA. We will be drafting an additional letter to planning commission. Given the condominium liability laws, it is really hard to produce a multifamily product that allows for homeownership. We are not against that type of build. Middle housing offers a homeownership model as the best way to build wealth. It gives you equity and savings and a place to rest your head. These are all great strategies, but we like to see opportunities for ownership regardless of product type. We need more medium density land throughout the city and county.
- From the Fire District perspective, parking continues to be an issue, especially in multi-family facilities. Access to these facilities is hampered, causing dangerous conditions and delays in providing emergency service. Reducing parking spaces does not limit parking, it simply moves it to perimeter streets and creates vehicles parking in no-parking areas.

PAG member follow-up:

- I would encourage us to do whatever is needed to make the cottage developments feasible and affordable.

Next Steps

The project team will make the revisions that were agreed to today and package all of the deliverables from the project into one plan which will go to planning commission and County Council this spring for their guidance in which strategies should move forward. We will then refine those and prepare them for implementation, going back to planning commission and County Council later this year for adoption. We will most likely go to planning commission in March and County Council April.

We encourage you to participate and provide testimony in support of the strategies you are in support of as we go through this process. Once we get that guidance, we will be in touch to provide you with an opportunity to help us refine the strategies and again as we move toward the adoption process.

Adjourn